

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUNDER/FEATURE ON THE CONFERENCE AND VERDANT WORLD

“At Verdant World, we are innovative problem solvers. Over the last three years, we have done some deep listening to key NGOs around the world working on the front lines of forest recovery in order to get to the roots of their core problems, so we better understand what is needed in the areas of global cooperation for amplify the impact collective organizations could make on the problem if they work together. With the Verdant World Council Gathering, we are creating a heart-based, four day intensive retreat for NGOs to be in a community with each other to forge shared solutions to some of our Planet’s most pressing problems, with the goal that when we all work together, real change happens.” - Tom Eddington, Co-Founder of Verdant World

On the heels of the NYC Climate Week and the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit, a small group of stakeholders for global forest recovery will be gathering for a 4 day retreat to focus on a verdant world to include global forest health, supporting biodiversity, and shifting the trajectory for the long term survival of humanity. The Verdant World Council Gathering will meet October 2-6, 2019 at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center in Sonoma County, CA, USA. The Council is convening to inform and architect collaboration methods to increase solution-level forest protection and regeneration capacity.

Participants include representatives from diverse organizations, including the UN, US Forest Service, WeForest, TreeSisters, Green World Campaign, Trees For The Future, Carbon Path, Crowther Lab, Foundation Earth, Wild Heritage, IUCN, The Black Jaguar Foundation, Rainforest Connection, Coherence Lab and others to engage in creating viable and sustaining paths to unprecedented coordinated global action. The goal is to create a fundamental shift in the NGO world - a new node of NGOs centered around various key issues that includes an empowering action plan and the sharing of resources and funds.

In the last five years, public awareness has drastically increased around the many benefits that trees provide for human health, economic opportunity, community resilience, and environmental integrity on local, regional and global scales – challenging the many organizations currently protecting and restoring forests to scale and needing to replicate their efforts rapidly. Yet, of all the advances, environmental NGOs rarely collaborate and share resources in solving the planet’s most pressing environmental problems as is seen in other industry sectors, like medicine where many of the world’s top scientists are beginning to now share information openly to find cures for the crippling diseases facing mankind.

In order to encourage collaboration and collective problem solving amongst the world's top environmentalists and scientists, Verdant World is organizing hundreds of groups around the world in the next five years, with the aim of developing innovative global action plans created jointly by the world's most respected NGOs to develop solutions to the most pressing issues threatening sustainable life on our planet.

Two of Verdant World's co-founders Paul Schmidt and Tom Eddington believe that, unlike many fields such as medical research and tech where knowledge and breakthroughs are shared, too often in the environmental realm organizations and their activities are "siloed" – working on important issues without the benefit of knowing about the important strides others with common goals are achieving.

In the nonprofit world, even though funding is now starting to flow freely for environmental causes, key players working on solutions to environmental and climate issues don't have the mechanisms in place to communicate. Today, unlike many other industries, there is no protocol for collaboration. The purpose of the Verdant World Events are to connect previously siloed leaders of environmental NGOs so that they can share their resources, knowledge, research and breakthroughs around the area of reforestation.

Our goal at every event we organize is to help leaders, working on the front lines of each specific issue, create their own unique action plans and communication models within the reforestation realm, with the end result being each group of experts gathered to create a shared action plan for coordination and moving forward "Within those silos, there is intense focus on specific issues," says Schmidt, a business design and development consultant who has worked with non-profits, educational institutions, product companies, software developers and hospitality organizations throughout the U.S., Canada, Bermuda and Europe.

"Verdant World is casting a wider net with respect to the diversity of who we bring to the table. We have seen time and again the benefits of people learning from other experts and coordinating between different environmental realms, like the agricultural, water and tree communities. There's no organization that brings NGO's in this specific space together for meeting, planning and sharing information and resources."

"It's easy for people to see us as a consulting firm, but that's only part of what we do," adds Eddington, who has spent the last three decades in business as an educator, entrepreneur and strategic advisor and brokered some of the largest mergers in corporate history, including HP-Compaq. "At Verdant World, we are innovative problem solvers. For too many years, the focus was on simply planting trees, but now there are evolved models that show us that you can't just plant trees to help the climate crisis. You also have to protect old growth forests and use pioneer trees to help them grow and keep the forests intact.

"The simple problems of the planet have been solved and the level of complexity facing us now is beyond the scope of our current models, ways of thinking and consciousness," he adds. "So there are a lot of people making multiple attempts to solve problems in various ways. One of the key issues is that our collective relationship with the environment is causing systemic level

breakdowns. It's not simply about models but changing our behavior and developing a more expansive consciousness.”

The mission of Verdant World is to facilitate collaboration in support of increasing the capacity of forest protection and restoration organizations to fulfill the goal of complete global forest recovery. The organization's activities are focused on igniting the power of this solution level conversation and providing resources that connect and align the wisdom, expertise, and resources to get the job done. Its Founders believe that when leaders gather together, share and act from a solution level perspective, the conversations amongst experts becomes a source of insight, inspiration, and aligned action. True partnership is possible and new pathways to healing our whole planet become clear.

The Verdant World Conversation began in early 2017 out of a personal connection that arose for three of its Founders who shared the idea that the simple act of planting trees could solve climate change. They saw an opportunity to facilitate a transformation in the 'sector' of tree planting organizations and experts. They felt that they could support a conversation that would reveal new systems to shift the scale and velocity of action required to recover global forest health with urgency and integrity.

They began holding virtual meetings and quickly found that in the simple act of sharing this vision, a strong energy of alignment and inspiration would invariably arise. “For nearly everyone we met, the idea of people coming together and trusting in a conversation to harness wisdom, the nature of which none of us understand individually but all of us know collectively, was undeniably compelling.”

Verdant World's core team expanded as their weekly conversations continued to reinforce a culture of radical trust and relationships with amazing people and, with deepening awareness of the interconnected pieces, their original idea matured to reveal a detailed understanding of the rich web of benefits forests provide beyond just supporting the cooling of our world.

As the true potential became apparent, they achieved a level of clarity, that a Verdant World not only can or will, but IS already happening. Being able to operate with access to a wellspring of hope in the face of a global conversation that doesn't exude positive reinforcement was not only refreshing, it became empowering. “The common thread that has kept the organization growing,” Schmidt says, “is that whenever we share our vision for the forest and humans thriving in balance on the planet, people tell us they are on board or get on board quickly. That allows for a vast opportunity for an energetic, proactive approach to solving these issues.”